



Gearing Up For Your Transitions

How to Make Wise Decisions About Drugs and Smoking

Adapted with permission from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Specialized Care

1. You only get one body, so it is your job to take care of it the best that you can.
2. **Trying to say “NO” to things like tobacco and alcohol is often difficult**, especially when you are a teen and under lots of peer pressure to “be cool.” If you are feeling pressure, speak to an adult friend, teacher or your parent about the peer pressure. You are an individual and do not have to do everything your friends do.
3. **You need to decide what is right for you.** Make sure you get ALL of the facts before you jump to a decision. Research online by doing a search and find out how drugs or smoking could harm you.
4. **Medications, tobacco, and alcohol are all chemicals** that cause your body to react in different ways. When they are combined they can create severe reactions. These things can cause long term effects that you will not notice until later in life.
5. **Ask your pharmacist** about the medications you take and what substances might interfere with them and put you at risk for developing serious side effects.
6. **If you are unsure about trying something new, wait awhile** and give yourself time to make the decision that is right for you. It may very well change or save your life.
7. **Practice what to say in advance.** To avoid being uncomfortable around people your own age when the issue of drugs or smoking comes up, it is good to know what you are going to say in advance. You can use humor, give them a reason, fact or excuse, change the subject, repeat the word “No” or offer them an alternative.
 - “No Thanks”.
 - “No, I choose to be drug free.”
 - “Drugs and cigarettes are not good for me.”
 - “My parents would ground me for life.”
 - “It could make me really sick.”
 - “I have to go somewhere, excuse me.”

Remember as you age you may experience a variety of people in your life. Each with their own ideas on what is cool or what they like to do. You, as a decision maker, can pick and choose those you associate with and what you want to allow into your life. Being prepared in advance with your answer can save you a lot of difficulty later.